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To : The Secretary
Through: S/S
From : INR - Thomas L. Hughes
Subject: DISARMAMENT--Moscow's View of The Politics of American ABMs

The full text of Vikenty Matveyev's March 12-13 Izvestiya article "Arms and Disarmament" became available here today. It was not, as some of the Western newspapers suggested, a threat against a US ABM deployment. It was an analysis of US politics on the subject.

A New Movement in the US. Matveyev saw the development of a new movement which was gathering momentum in the US. He described it as parallel to but different from the anti-Vietnam-war movement. This new current had focussed its attention on the Sentinel ABM system. Matveyev pointed out that Senate opposition was on an unprecedented scale, but he argued that Congressional opponents were but a small part of the whole movement. While belaboring inter alia the theme of how expensive the Sentinel system was, Matveyev said nothing of Soviet ABMs. As a result of this new current in the US, there was a trend toward polarization in the American bourgeoisie between the military and their opponents.

Disarmament Possibilities. The article says nothing substantive about Soviet disarmament proposals. It mentions the July 1, 1968 aide-mémoire but does not bother to recapitulate

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the nine points in it. Matveyev reiterates Soviet interest in starting talks on strategic arms limitation as a rebuttal to the arguments of those Americans who might try to justify arms spending (including Sentinel) on the grounds that there was not agreement with the USSR.

Timing and Prospects. It is not unusual for the Soviet press to carry long comments on disarmament shortly before reconvenings of the Geneva disarmament conference. But Matveyev does not even mention the Geneva meeting next week. His focus was clearly on US internal debates, and his article was more likely timed to the postponement of the President's ABM decision until today and to the Gore Committee hearings.

Matveyev was careful, however, not to make any specific threats about how ABM deployment by the US might affect talks. All he did was to borrow from Western commentators the proposition that the present correlation of forces was favorable for arms control. He did not attempt to say how a US ABM deployment might affect that correlation.

We doubt that the ABM program announced by the President will have much effect on Soviet tactics in arms control talks-- Moscow has long anticipated the US ABM deployment in some form. However, Matveyev's article does suggest that the USSR is becoming increasingly sensitive to political currents in the US on disarmament issues. If so, Moscow may be tempted in coming weeks

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to play more to the galleries on disarmament issues, on the theory that the old Soviet techniques of using disarmament as a vehicle for political propaganda and pressure may now promise more tangible results.

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